The Chautauqua Movement

By FREDERIC J. HASKIN

The Chautauqua Assembly is another institution that is strictly American in its conception and development. It is estimated that more than two million people will listen to the political reformers, scientists, moralists, entertainers and travelers who will speak at the 600 assemblies that will be held this summer. Time was when the orator was confined to the pulpit and the campaign stump, but the Chautauqua has changed that, and the man of eloquence now has a broader field to work in and a more remunerative reward for his labor.

The first meeting of this kind was when Bishop John H. Vincent called a meeting of Sunday school workers to assemble at Lake Chautauqua in the summer of 1874. The meeting was so successful that it was made an annual affair. Four years later Bishop Vincent introduced the four years' course of home study and reading. The "Circles" which took up this course of reading grew so rapidly that there were 8400 members the first year. Meanwhile the attendance at Lake Chautauqua increased and the course of study there was extended almost to the measure of a university. Other assemblies began to appear and in ten years there was a score of them. The growth was gradual until about six years ago, when in the Middle West particularly the summer assemblies sprang up by the dozen.

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Chautauqua Institute, the parent assembly, located by the lake which has given its name to the whole movement, is the largest of them all. The summer population of 25,000 is all drawn by this attraction, although many do not follow the work of the course. Others, like Winona Lake, Indiana, and Monteagle, Tennessee, have a session extending through the entire summer, and maintain schools attended by thousands. The greater number of assemblies, however, have short sessions of from eight days to three weeks' duration. In these there is no course of instruction beyond the Bible hour in the early forenoon, and the round table in the afternoon, which is an open discussion free for all. The feature of these assemblies is the lectures.

The late Sam Jones said: "We haven't enough religion to run a camp meeting and the county fair has played out, so we organize Chautauquas." Indeed, the Chautauqua has taken the place of the camp meeting and the county fair. In a Missouri town of a thousand inhabitants a thousand season tickets were sold to the Chautauqua, and on the day William Jennings Bryan spoke there were 3000 single tickets sold. Farmers and their families come for many miles and camp in tents to attend the session. At Huron, South Dakota, nearly a thousand country people were encamped at the edge of the city on the hot, treeless plains, undergoing great inconveniences, just to be able to obtain the entertainment and instruction offered by the local Chautauqua assembly.

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Thus these assemblies have supplanted the camp meeting and the county fair, but they are as far ahead of those older American institutions as electric lights are superior to tallow dips. A village of a thousand people organizes a Chautauqua assembly. Many of its most enterprising people, especially the women, have been taking the course of Chautauqua home reading for years and are familiar with the work of the movement. They talk and raise enthusiasm. The country side is interested and season tickets are sold long in advance to insure against financial disaster. Finally, the Chautauqua week comes, the big tent is erected and the country people arrive and go into camp. What are they offered? The earnest eloquence of an uneducated camp meeting exhorter? No. The excitement of a race between a mule and a calf on the fair grounds race track? No.

They hear Mr. Bryan on "The Value of an Ideal," or Senator LaFollette on political reforms, or Governor Folk on corruption in office, or Tom Lawson on "Frenzied Finance." Perhaps it may be a debate between Champ Clark and General Grosvenor on the tariff question—a better debate than can be heard in the halls of Congress. Maybe they will listen to ex-Governor St. John or George R. Stuart on temperance reform. "Sunshine" Hawkes may be there to delight the audience, old and young, with his quaint optimistic humor, or George R. Wendling may thrill his hearers with his eloquent lectures. Perhaps Senator "Bob" Taylor will exhort to laughter and tears by his humorous and pathetic pictures of Tennessee life. Maybe Ben Tillman will fire the people by his passionate exposition of the race issue. Next day, perhaps, Booker Washington will tell of the work at Tuskegee institute. Interspersed between these intellectual treats will be a concert or two by some good orchestra, a travel lecture with pictures, or some other lighter form of entertainment.

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Such a week is marked by red letters in the calendars of that little village and its surrounding territory. How could such lecturers as these have been brought to so small a town without the Chautauqua? It would be impossible. And likewise it would be impossible for the people there to go to a place where such lectures can be heard. Dwellers in large cities who think these things would be a bore have no notion of the enjoyment which they afford to the people of smaller cities and of the country. The city dweller, satiated with entertainment of every sort, often looks upon the lecture as a refinement of cruelty which his wife has invented through the medium of the Woman's club to punish him for his sins.

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Yet any thorough student of American life will tell him that if such an intellectual feast as the Chautauqua affords does not appeal to him as it does to his country cousin, the reason is that he isn't as well prepared to receive it. The man in the country town and on the farm has more time than the city man, and he uses it in reading. Pick up any farmer and pit him against any wholesale merchant in a political argument, and, regardless of the merits of the controversy, the farmer will have him up a tree in a few minutes. The farmer is better informed. He takes one or two daily papers and several weeklies. He reads every line in them, and talks it all over with his neighbors. That is the reason members of Congress with rural constituencies have to be so much more careful than their city colleagues.

The Chautauqua has brought to the rural reader the men of whom he has read. Mr. Bryan is no longer a caricature to him—he has heard Bryan speak, and not on politics. La Follette is no longer a pompadoured Quixote, riding full tilt at a railroad merger windmill—the farmer has listened to him talk. Ben Tillman is no longer a fire-breathing dragon with claws of pitchforks—the countryside has seen the jovial Southern man when he isn't angry.

For many reasons the Chautauqua platform is most attractive to orators and statesmen, both those without jobs and those with them. Mr. Bryan addresses audiences of from 3000 to 15,000 people each day for ten weeks in the summer Chautauqua season. For these speeches he is well paid. He makes money and he meets the people of the Nation. The same thing is true of La Follette and Champ Clark and Dolliver and other politicians, who like to earn money and also like to keep next to the people. None of them speaks to as many people as Mr. Bryan, however, for Bryan day at every Chautauqua is almost invariably the record-breaker.

The influences of the Chautauqua on the community are all for the good and are quite marked. The leading people of the town unite to organize the assembly, and the various clergymen and ministers are always interested. This promotes fraternity among the churches, tends to lessen denominational competition and brings the religious life of a town into harmony. The lectures and lessons also promote a desire for good reading, and many people are inspired to take up serious books, or to begin a reading course such as is laid down by the C. L. S. C.—the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. The desire to read means a demand for books, and in many towns of the Middle West the Chautauqua movement is directly responsible for the erection and maintenance of a free public library.

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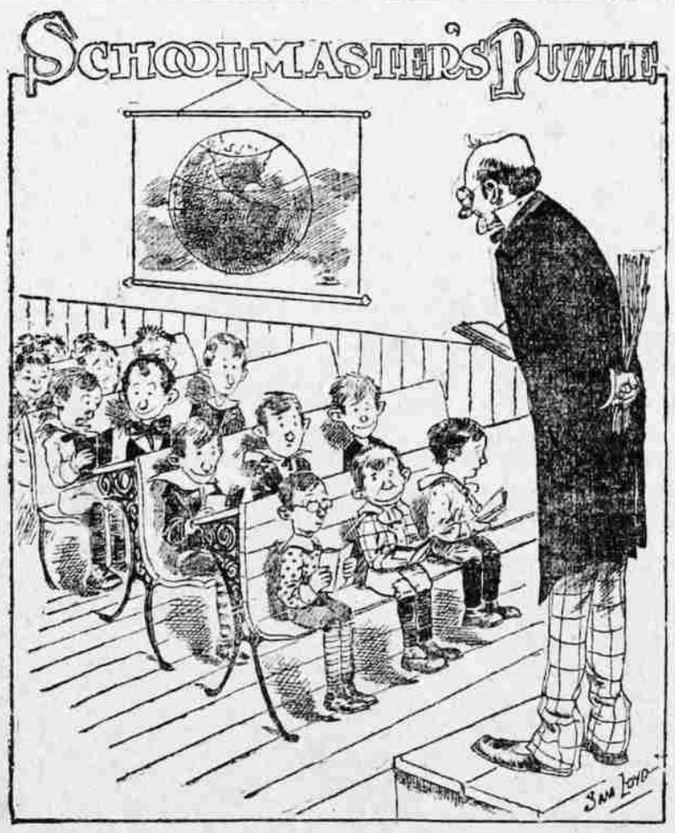
Chickasha, Indian Territory, is a town yet in its 'teens, but its handsome library in a Grecian building of stone, has been fitted out with a good collection of reference books by the local Chautauquans. These Chautauquans have saved many a Carnegie library by agitating the public mind, and preventing a City Council from going back on the promise of so much a year to buy books and maintain the library.

Then the Chautauqua assembly advances the standard of education in the community. The local high school is benefited, and many youths are now in college who would have been on the farm if their fathers had not been awakened by the Chautauqua assembly to the value of a higher education. Fewer young men are kept away from college by poverty in these prosperous times than by the notion of parents that a college education is a useless and expensive thing, which is more likely to ruin the boy than to help him.

While New England, the South, and the Pacific coast have all taken kindly to the Chautauqua movement, it has reached its fullest development in the prosperous States of the Middle West—Iowa leading with more than sixty assemblies, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Wisconsin and Michigan follow with from forty down to twelve assemblies each. The movement is growing every summer, and bids fair to double scope within the next two or three years.

No greater movement for education of adults has ever been undertaken, and like all distinctively American movements, it sprang from the demand of the people for such education, and is not the growth of a plan to force education upon the uneducated. The people desired to come in contact with the leading men of the day, and when they found that the Chautauqua would serve their purpose they welcomed it.



SCHOOLMASTER'S PUZZLE.

"You are an odd lot of scholars, and less than four score," said the schoolmaster.

"When I place you three on a bench, Johnnie Green has to sit upon the rear bench alone; then when you are seated four on a bench, Johnnie still has to sit alone, and even when you crowd five on a bench, little Johnnie is left over."

As we can see but one corner of the schoolroom, who can tell from the schoolmaster's remarks just how many scholars he had in the class?

HERE IS THE SOLUTION TO 1907 PUZZLE PRINTED IN THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE.

Prof. Figger's proposition to arrange the ten figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 8, 9 0 in a sum which will foot up as close as possible to 1907, may be worked out as follows so as to produce exactly 1907:

1809
75
6
34-2
1907

The fraction 34-2 equals 17, which added to 1909 plus 75 plus 6 gives a total of 1907.